

MINUTES
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission Meeting
Helena Headquarters
1420 East 6th Avenue - Helena, MT 59620
CONFERENCE CALL

December 6, 2004

Commission Members Present: Dan Walker, Chairman; Mike Murphy; John Brenden

Fish, Wildlife & Parks Staff: Jeff Hagener; Chris Smith; Jeff Herbert; Regena Peterson

Chairman Walker called the conference call meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

1. Terminate Over-The-Counter Sales of A9 / B12 Licenses in HD298-80 (a multi-district which includes portions of HDs 281, 285, 290, 291, 292, and 293 in the Helmville-Ovando area). **Jeff Herbert, FWP Wildlife Division Assistant Administrator**, informed the Commission that the Department has been selling over-the-counter unlimited A9 / B12 antlerless elk licenses for use in HD298-80, which is in the Blackfoot Valley on predominantly private land. HD292 is over the elk objective and the other districts are at or near objective. The season ends January 1, 2005.

In 2003, A9/B12 licenses for this district were made available through a drawing, with the quota set at 200. This year, sales were made over-the-counter to be comparable to other districts. Access to these private lands is difficult to obtain. The regulations specifically state that access is difficult to obtain, and that permission should be secured from landowners prior to purchasing this license. When licenses are sold, FWP staff reiterates this information. It is important to note that this is not a part of the season extension acted on in November.

This year, sales have increased to an unanticipated degree. As of Friday, December 3, 2004, over 2,100 licenses were sold. Block Management cooperators are overrun with hunters, and other landowners are inundated with hunters and requests to hunt. Reservations on the weekends are totally booked up. There are more than enough hunters to deal with the harvest.

The Department recommendation is to terminate the sale of additional A9 / B12 antlerless licenses in HD298-80, effective immediately, for the remainder of the 2004-2005 hunting season, which ends January 1, 2005. After December 12, 2004, when the season extension concludes, pressure will increase even more in this area if licenses are still available until January 1, 2005. This action does not end the season, but stops additional sales for a 2nd antlerless elk license. Herbert said since there are no check-stations in the district, it is impossible to know the degree of success.

Herbert added that Bob Lane, FWP Legal Counsel, has advised that this action to terminate sales is entirely within Commission authority.

Action: Murphy moved and Brenden seconded the motion to terminate A9 / B12 antlerless elk licenses sales in the HD298-80 multi-district for the remainder of the 2004-2005 hunting season, effective immediately.

Discussion on Motion: Brenden inquired if a significant amount of land was closed to hunting in the area, to which Herbert replied that the Meyers Ranch, which is fairly large, is restrictive on access.

Herbert said the Department felt 400 license holders would have been sufficient to reach harvest objectives. Next year, there will not be multi-district A9 licenses available, so this should not be an issue again. Walker stated that if this type of license is ever used again in the future, a mechanism must be in place to prevent predicaments such as this. Herbert agreed and assured the Commission that there will be a strategy in place.

Herbert and Hagener assured the Commission that hunters who purchased these licenses were informed up front that they need landowner permission to hunt, that access is difficult, and their opportunity may be limited. There are a number of block management cooperators involved, however they are inundated with hunters and may choose to limit access.

Action on Motion: Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 1:55 p.m.

Dan Walker, Chairman

M. Jeff Hagener, Director